



Mekong River Commission

Terms of Reference Consultant for drafting of the MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015

Post title: Resource person / Writer for drafting the MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015
Project: Formulation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015
Type of assignment: Short-term consultancy
Duration: 40 working days, starting in 01st May 2010 to December 2010
Duty station: 20-30 days at MRC Secretariat office, Vientiane, Lao PDR

1. Background

The MRC is embarking on a process for the formulation of a new plan for the period 2011 – 2015, as the period covered by the current Strategic Plan ends in 2010. This new Strategic Plan will be informed by (i) the mandate of the 1995 Mekong Agreement (ii) the foundation and lessons learnt from implementing the 2006-2010 and earlier Strategic Plans, (iii) the evolving development context in the Mekong Basin, (iv) ongoing discussion on MRC's Core Functions (v) current developments in MRC Programmes, and (vi) other inputs from Member Countries and stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 went through a long process of discussion in order to define the overall vision and mission of the MRC. There was a strategic re-orientation at the level of the Strategic Plan's goal towards more effective use of the Mekong water and related resources for poverty alleviation while protecting the environment.

Visions and Mission

VISION for the Mekong River Basin – An economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin

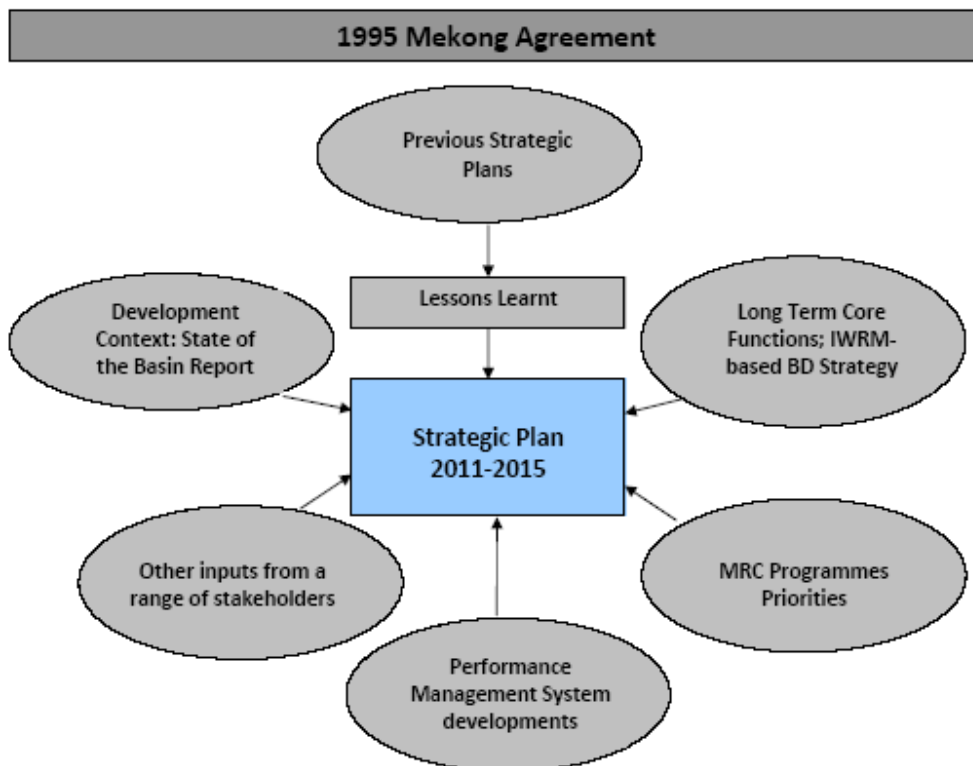
VISION for the Mekong River Commission – A world class, financially secure, International River Basin Organisation serving the Mekong countries to achieve the basin Vision

MISSION of the Mekong River Commission – To promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the people's well-being

The process for the Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 however showed a disproportionate amount of time spent in discussing the role and added value of MRC at the expense of the

formulation of an implementation plan and a monitoring and evaluation system. The strategic goals for the past three Strategic Plans have changed little (see Annex 1) and the 1995 Mekong Agreement provides the overall mandate for the organisation. It is therefore suggested that less time will be needed to discuss the goals for the formulation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and more attention focused on the strategy for delivery.

Furthermore, the emerging directions for IWRM through the Basin Development Plan (BDP) Programme and ongoing discussion on MRC's core functions will inform the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and will strengthen its strategic orientation. The State of the Basin Report, which will be published in 2010, will provide the basis for describing the Mekong Development Context. Development of the results-based monitoring and evaluation system will also provide a more rigorous focus and structured approach to defining expected outcomes. The related activities are depicted in the figure below.



Thus, the challenge for the formulation of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan will be to focus on ensuring the translation of the Strategic Plan orientation into concrete implementation work plan with clear priority activities, a clearer link to the MDGs and poverty reduction in areas where MRC can make a difference, relevant regional partnerships and a more performance orientated approach as recommended by the mid-term review of the 2006-2010 Strategic Plan.

To achieve this challenging work, the Twenty-ninth Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee, held on 26-27 March 2009, Muang Thong Thani, Thailand, agreed that the

formulation of the Plan will be open to broad consultation and that the inputs from Member Countries will constitute the heart of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

In each member country, national consultations have been organized following organizational and substantive guidance from the MRC Secretariat (*‘Concept Note for National Consultations for the Formulation of the Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015’*). Outputs of these consultation workshops will be used to feed into the formulation of the Strategic Plan.

Below is the tentative schedule of the milestone events relating to the formulation and launch of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity/Event</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Dec 2009 – Jan 2010	National consultations (on formulation of SP 2011-2015)	Review of MRC vision, mission and goal statements; Discussion on MRC core functions; National inputs to other key questions
1-3 March 2010	31 st Joint Committee meeting	Revised process and timeline approved
16-17 March 2010	First regional meeting (on formulation of SP 2011-2015, & MRC strategic plan level results chain)	- National input papers presented and discussed; - Draft strategic directions discussed; - Comments on the proposed strategic plan level results chain
May 2010	First draft of the Strategic Plan circulated for comments	Draft technical papers available; MDGs and poverty reduction linkages clarified
(24-25) June 2010	Second regional meeting on SP 2011-2015 Informal Donor Meeting 2010	Consultation on the First draft of the Strategic Plan
July 2010	2 nd draft of the Strategic Plan circulated	
3-4 August 2010	32 nd Joint Committee meeting	Second draft of the Strategic Plan reviewed
5 August 2010	15 th Dialogue Partners meeting	
September 2010	Multi-stakeholder Forum	Consultation on the Second draft of the Strategic Plan
October 2010	Joint Committee Special Session	Endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015
October/November 2010	17 th Council / 15 th DCG	Approval of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015
January 2011	Launch and implementation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015	Formal signing and launching event

2. Objectives of the Assignment

The main objective of the consultancy is to ensure that a well structured and coherent Strategic Plan is drafted that fully reflects national needs and strategic priorities for MRC in a changing development context and meets professional and international standards for such a plan.

The specific objectives include:

- Ensure that all the national perspectives and inputs from a range of MRC stakeholders are fully reflected in the draft paper with regard to MRC mandate and roles, core river basin management functions and strategic directions of the MRC, as well as other national needs and concerns relating to the Mekong river basin;
- Ensure that MRC Programmes' priorities and strategic directions are fully reflected in the draft paper;
- Ensure that lessons learned from the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 are integrated and reflected in the draft paper;
- Ensure that the draft shall be consistent with the outcomes-oriented approach and results-based Performance Management System

3. Tasks description

Toward the objectives depicted here, the consultant will be responsible for the following aspects:

- Familiarity with all the background documents
- Under guidance from the Secretariat working group on the SP and through a number of internal and external consultations, prepare a draft strategic directions paper for the MRC for the period of 2011-2015, which will be used as draft paper for MRC internal discussions for the formulation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015;
- Prepare the various drafts of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 for the MRC incorporating comments and further inputs
- Revise and finalize the draft Strategic Plan for MRC Council approval based on further inputs along the timeline as depicted in the table in Section 1.

4. Deliverables and timescale

The final outcome of the consultancy is a MRC Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015 that is drafted based on the outline/framework approved by the MRC and that meets the international and professional standards and is accepted by the MRC Secretariat based on these standards, for submission to the MRC Council for approval at its 17th Meeting in October/November 2010.

In order to reach the final outcome, the following deliverables are required:

- A draft MRC Strategic Plan (developed further on the substantive and structural outline of the draft strategic directions paper): first draft, circulated no later than 25th May 2010
- Second and subsequent versions of the MRC Strategic Plan as indicated in the timeframe and in the Terms of the Assignment (Section 8 below).

5. Reporting lines

The recruited resource person / writer will work under overall administrative supervision of the MRC Secretariat's International Cooperation and Communications Chief, or designated representative and the guidance of the MRC Secretariat Working Group on the Strategic Plan.

6. Selected background documents

- 1995 Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin
- MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010
- Mid-term Review of the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 and constituent papers
- Briefing notes on MRC Core Functions
- Basin Development Programme Phase II
- Performance Management System materials
- Mid term reviews of MRC programmes, eg BDP, EP, FMMP, IKMP.,
- Draft report on Common Guidelines for the Roles and Responsibilities of NMCs, NMCSs and MRCS in relation to Programme Implementation
- Consolidated reports from national facilitators and from NMCs for the National Consultations Workshops
- Technical papers prepared in support of the SP
- Other relevant documents, such as minutes of the Joint Committee, Council meetings and NMC documents

7. Qualification

- At least 7 years of experience in strategic planning of international development programmes
- Proven track record of writing strategic plans for international development programmes/organizations
- Experience with the outcome oriented performance management systems
- Familiar with the Mekong River Commission, or other regional river basin and/or regional water resources management organizations;
- Excellent communication and writing skills in English

8. Terms of the assignment

The assignment is output-based, for 40 working days over 10 months from March 2010 to December 2010. The number of days allocated for each activity is indicative only.

Activities	Output delivery date	Indicative duration (in days)
Reading background papers, meetings including some selected MRC Programme meetings and the 2 nd Regional Consultation		10
Prepare the first draft of the Strategic Plan	25 May 2010	10
Refine the first draft incorporating comments received	9 June 2010	5

Prepare the second draft of the Strategic Plan (from consolidated comments, further inputs)	07 July 2010	5
Revise and refine the 2 nd draft	Aug./Sep. 2010	5
Finalize the draft	Oct./Nov. 2010	5
Total		40

Note: The number of days allocated for each activity can be varied within the total indicated.

For about 20-30 working days of the assignment, the consultant would be expected to be working at the MRC Secretariat office where the consultant will participate in several MRC/MRCS meetings.

The number of days the consultant will be based in Vientiane could be split up to 3 trips, tentatively suggested as below.

At the MRC Secretariat office, in Vientiane:

- 10-15 days in May when preparing the first draft;
- 5 days in June when the second Regional Consultation meeting is organized to get country feedbacks to the first draft;
- 5 days from August to November when the draft is finalized for submission for JC endorsement